

Washington, DC -- U.S Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) today announced his cosponsorship of the Pollinator Protection Act (H.R. 1709) which would authorize \$75 million to study Colony Collapse Disorder and combat the unusual decline of honeybees affecting crop production in Upstate New York.

“We don’t often think about the role of honeybees in our daily lives, but from farmer’s fields to school cafeterias, honeybees play a critical role in national food production and the agricultural economy,” said Arcuri. “Crops from alfalfa to grapes depend on bees for pollination and as Colony Collapse Disorder diminishes local bee populations, farmers have to pay more for bees to pollinate their crops – placing an added strain on farmers across Upstate New York and threatening local food sources. In Congress, we are taking steps to ensure that this threat to the national food supply does not go unchecked.”

H.R. 1709 would authorize \$75 million in funding for Colony Collapse Disorder research - \$20.25 million over five years for the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and \$50 million over five years for research grants administered by the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES).

The bill includes \$2,500,000 for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for research on honeybee physiology, insect pathology, insect chemical ecology, and honeybee toxicology at Department of Agriculture facilities in New York, Florida, California, and Texas. It also includes \$1,750,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2010 for an area-wide research program to identify causes and solutions for Colony Collapse Disorder in affected States, such as New York.

One-third of the food supply in the country depends on honeybee pollination. Pollination by honeybees adds over \$15 billion annually to the value of United States crops. According to Cornell University, nearly \$200 million of these benefits accrue directly to growers and consumers of fruit, vegetable and seed crops in New York.

Colony Collapse Disorder is the name that has been given to the latest die-off of honeybee colonies, exacerbating the continual decline of pollinators in North America. Colonies in more than 23 states have been affected.

According to the New York Times, “bee losses are ranging from 30 to 60 percent on the West Coast, with some beekeepers on the East Coast and in Texas reporting losses of more than 70 percent; beekeepers consider a loss of up to 20 percent in the off-season to be normal.”

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